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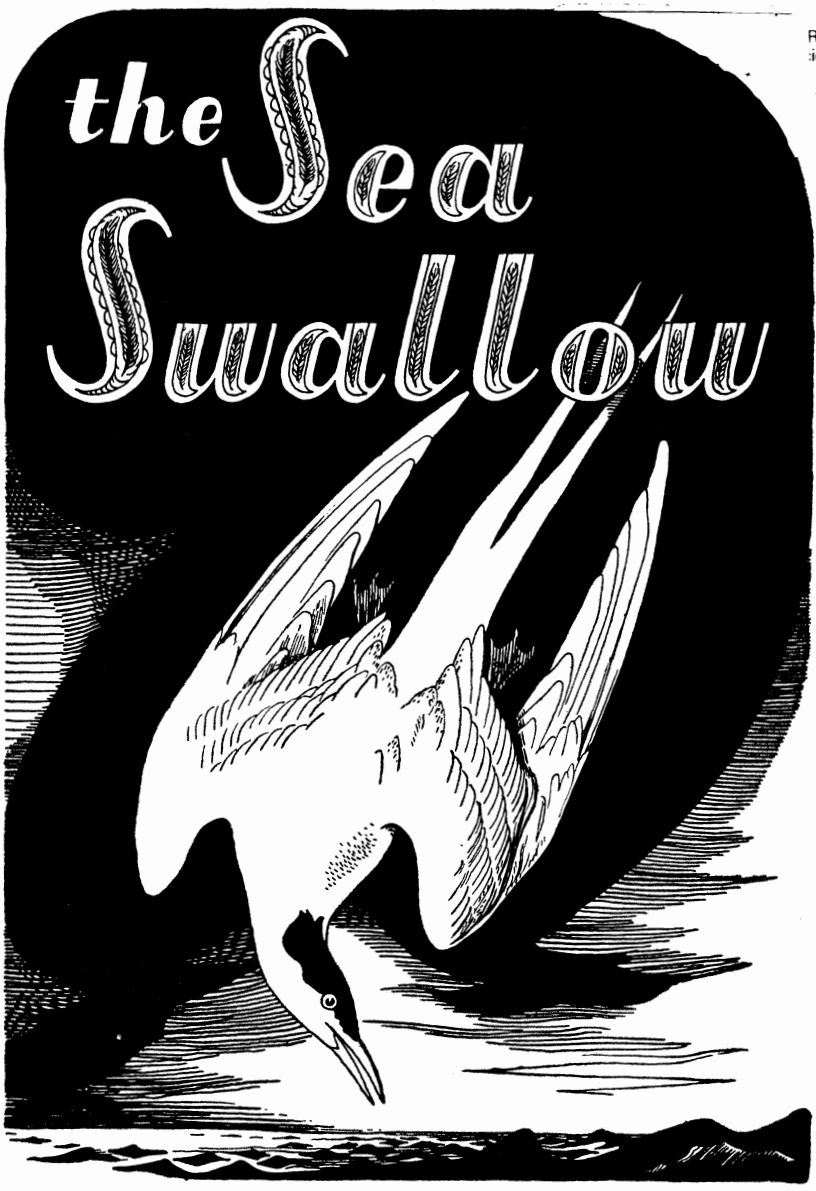

BEING THE ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE ROYAL NAVAL
BIRD WATCHING SOCIETY

Published June, 1949

THE ROYAL NAVAL BIRD-WATCHING SOCIETY

(Affiliated to the British Trust for Ornithology)

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1948

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The British Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus graellsii*) at Nest. (*Photograph by Lieut. Arthur Gilpin, R.N.V.R.*)

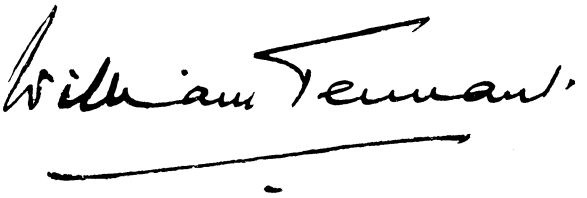
FOREWORD

The Society has made a good start and now embarks on its third year of life.

More ships have Alexander's Birds of the Ocean " or other suitable bird books on the bridge and many more are getting the habit of taking an interest in birds seen at sea. That surely is the main object of our Society.

We learn with regret that our able Secretary and Treasurer, Major Beal, is leaving the service. He will be sadly missed, and we all wish him luck and time to do some bird-watching wherever he may go.

Good fortune to all our members and may they have a successful year, even to the extent of rivalling the find of the supposedly extinct Notornis in New Zealand or the nest and eggs of the Bristle-sided Curlew.



H.M.S. Glasgow,
Americas and West Indies Squadron.
17*th January*, 1949.

EDITORIAL

The Editors apologise for the late appearance of this report, which has been caused by a prolonged search for a printer who could produce the magazine at a price suitable to the Society's pocket.

Although the records for 1948 have been fewer in number than those for the preceding year, the general standard of reports is of a much higher quality. Once again we must emphasise that a natural history society depends on the activity, enthusiasm, and co-operation of each one of its members for keeping it in a healthy and flourishing state. Remember—this means YOU ! So send in your observations however insignificant they may appear to you.

In reply to letters published in the " Ibis ", " British Birds ", the R.S.P.B. Quarterly Report and " Country Life " asking for sea records prior to the formation of the R.N.B.W.S. (in 1947), many answers, from members and non-members, have been received. These are given elsewhere and we would like to take this opportunity of thanking all concerned for the trouble they have taken.

Now that the Society has settled down a little the Advisory Committee feels that members, besides participating in Trust enquiries, would wish to take part in our own. The committee, after taking advice from those ornithologists, who have consented to assist the Society in an advisory capacity, will be issuing, in the near future, details of enquiries dealing with our own particular field—the sea

The Annual General Meeting was held in the Admiralty Cinema in December and the minutes have been sent to all members. A statement of the Society's accounts is produced elsewhere. After the ordinary business, Captain G. K. Yeats gave a talk on " The Birds of the Camargue ", illustrated by his slides. Both the talk and the slides were exceptionally good and on behalf of the Society we wish to thank Captain Yeats.

All those who have helped the Society during the past year, and there have been many, are thanked for their help. We thank also all members who have sent in records. Due to limitations of space it has been decided not to publish " Records from Home and Abroad " as was done last year. While the Editorial Committee are most anxious that members stationed ashore, at home and abroad, should take every opportunity to record their observations, they emphasise that such records should be submitted direct to the appropriate County natural history journal. Exceptions to this are all records dealing with sea birds ashore, at home and abroad, and records of sea and land birds from Malta and other islands seldom visited by naturalists.

Although some three to four hundred sea records have been received, only those considered to be of unusual interest have been included. Records of sea birds observed well within their known distribution range for the time of year are not included.

NEAL RANKIN
BERNARD JEANS
ARTHUR GILPIN
ERIC DUFFY
NOEL BEAL
} *Editorial Committee.*

BIRDS SEEN ON H.M.S. SHEFFIELD'S CRUISE FROM BERMUDA TO VANCOUVER

By Admiral Sir William Tennant, K.C.B., C.B., M.V.O.

I think the more one studies the sea-birds the more one realises what enormous tracts there are of the ocean over which a ship may pass without seeing any bird life at all. Such an area was that between the Panama Canal and Mexico. Again when one gets to the north, to a latitude similar to that of the British Isles all the coastal districts team with bird life.

On leaving Bermuda—that almost gull-less area—for this cruise on June 28th, we had the rare sight of seeing a seedy-looking Herring Gull. While making our offing a few tropic birds was all that was to be seen until we got down to the neighbourhood of the islands, when Sooty Terns and Shearwaters appeared. In the Windward passage we saw a number of White-capped Noddies, together with Blue-nosed and Brown Boobys, a magnificent Frigate bird, tropic birds and a Shearwater (possibly Manx).

On leaving the islands and crossing the Caribbean birds again become few, but much the same species we saw in the Windward passage appeared in small numbers together with a flock of unidentified Terns. In the Canal Area I saw, in addition, the Laughing Gull, Osprey, Snowy Egret, the small Bigua Cormorant and the Brown Pelican. An early morning expedition produced many of the Flycatchers, some Tanagers and Parakeets, for here we are getting into that zone of the northern South American area which, I believe, to be more prolific of bird life than any other area in the world.

We sailed away to the north on Wednesday, July 7th. One of our first visitors was a Black-vented Shearwater, who spent the night on board and was placed in a wash-deck locker till he could be introduced to me in the morning. He greatly resented the indignity of such quarters and flew away unharmed after I had identified him, making somewhat contemptuous remarks ! Petrels (I think Wilsons and Bulwers), Frigate birds and a Murrelet, possibly Cravens, were seen.

Off Costa Rica, in latitude 10½ north, we met for the first time the Black-footed Albatross, and he remained with us from there right up to the latitude of Vancouver, whenever the ship was well clear of the coast. I never saw him near the coast. There were young and old birds, and they spent nearly all their time gliding over our wake.

On July 9th, in about latitude 14° north, there was brought to me what I believe to be a Gallapagos Stormy Petrel. He also was released and went on his way. As I have mentioned before, with the exception of a few Boobies and Frigate birds and occasionally a Petrel,

this coast was remarkably birdless and the ones we did see appeared generally to be collected around a shoal of fish.

Our next port of call was Acapulco (Mexico). Here on the rocks off the harbour again I saw large numbers of Boobies, a few Waders and Frigate birds. A visit to Mexico City and a long drive in the country produced remarkably few birds, and the drive down from Mexico City to the coast, distances of 287 miles only showed me a few Redwing Blackbirds, Black Vultures, a few Grackles, a Flycatcher, some Swallows and Swifts and absolutely nothing else.

No change in bird life on leaving Acapulco until July 19th when in latitude 27° north, an Amercian Oystercatcher joined the ship and remained on board for over 24 hours. I think it was possibly even money whether he got ashore or whether the Albatross got him.

Off the Californian coast in latitude 30° north, we saw during the day a Brown Pelican, very large numbers of what I believe to be Sooty Shearwaters, the Black-footed Albatross and two Petrels, possibly Peales and Wilsons.

We arrived at Los Angeles on July 22nd and I record a few Brown Pelicans, Western Gulls, a very small Tern, probably the Least Tern.

On leaving Los Angeles, where social life and film studios loom largely and certainly take priority over the bird world, we turned to the north for the Oregon coast. Western Gulls and Black-footed Albatross' were our constant companions at sea. Strangely enough, a large flock of Western Gulls for a time took up their position round the stem of the ship instead of following in the wake of the Albatross. A Guillemot and a Puffin also appeared.

Off the Columbia River we first met the Glaucous-winged Gull and we were to see him constantly from here to the north. In the Vancouver area , as I mentioned above, sea-birds were in very large supply, and at any time near the coast one was likely to see the Glaucous-winged Boneparte, Herring and Ring-billed Gull, and, in addition, generally saw in the saltings, the Loon or Great Northern Diver, Black Duck, Merganser and Great Blue Heron. And of the Waders in Vancouver, I saw Snipe, Greater and Lesser Yellow Legs, the Western and Leest Sand-Pipers, the Willet and Dowicher.

Pintail, Mallard and Black Duck were in places plentiful and tame, but then the shooting season had not yet commenced. An interesting and local gull which appeared after the Golden Gate at San Francisco was Hermans and strangely enough they seemed to be in company with the Pelicans in the hopes of picking up bits from the Pelicans fishing expeditions. The Phalarope was also in evidence off San Francisco, the only place on the coast that I met him.

THE IDENTIFICATION OF SHEARWATERS AT SEA IN THE ATLANTIC

By LIEUTENANT A. L. MAYO, R.N.V.R.

Ashore shearwaters are rather weird nocturnal birds, which return in the spring to their selected breeding places, where they breed in holes or under rocks, to and from which they very rarely go except at dusk and in the night. At sea, however, they are to be seen at all hours of the day.

Some species, of course, vary very much in size and colour, but in certain other general respects they are similar, having long bodies and bills, the latter often quite markedly hooked when seen at close range, proportionately long pointed wings, and a characteristic action in flight. In normal weather conditions once fully airborne shearwaters flap their wings very little, but glide along just above the water closely following the contours of the waves, rising just enough to top a crest and tilting over to slip down into the trough beyond, and so on, only flapping their wings once or twice here and there. In a flat calm flying conditions are different, and more wing flapping has to be employed, and also the smaller shearwaters tend to flap their wings considerably more than the larger species do. They all appear to disregard ships, and do not follow astern.

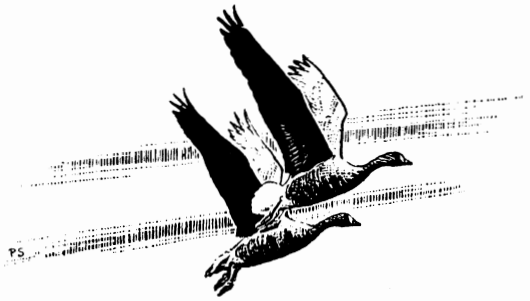
The commonest species to be seen around the coasts of Great Britain is the Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus p. puffinus*) which is about the size of a Kittiwake (*Rissa t. tridactyla*) and has black upper parts and white under parts—so has the Razorbill (*Alca torda britannica*) and the Northern and Southern Guillemots (*Uria a. aalge* and *Uria aalge albionis*), but these birds have a very straight direct flight on rapidly flapping, whirring wings, and do not glide along in the rather aimless manner of shearwaters.

The Madeiran Little Shearwater (*Puffinus assimilis baroli*) occurs in the neighbourhood of the Azores, Madeira, the Canaries, etc., and the Cape Verde Islands. Both are dark above and white below, but they are smaller than the Manx Shearwater. On the western side of the Atlantic there is Audubon's Shearwater (*Puffinus l'h. l'herminieri*) which is very similar to the Cape Verde Islands Little Shearwater, and like the latter species has the underside of the tail dark, and not white as in the Madeiran Little Shearwater, but this characteristic is extremely difficult to see at sea.

The Manx Shearwater is seldom seen far out at sea, but there you may come across two larger species, namely the Great Shearwater (*Puffinus gravis*) and the North Atlantic Shearwater) *Puffinus kuhlii borealis*). Both of these birds are large, nearer in size to a Herring Gull (*Larus a. argentatus*) than to a Kittiwake, and they are rather similar in appearance unless a clear view of the head and neck can be obtained. Both have greyish brown upperparts and whitish underparts, but the North Atlantic Shearwater has a grey-brown head and neck, the colour merging into that of the back without any marked line of demarcation, whereas the Great Shearwater has a clearly defined dark chocolate coloured skull cap, which contrasts sharply with the white of the throat and neck which nearly, but not quite, separates it from the grey-brown of the back.

In the neighbourhood of the Cape Verde Islands may be seen the Cape Verde Islands Great Shearwater (*Puffinus kuhlii edwardsii*) which is very slightly smaller than, but otherwise very similar to, the North Atlantic Shearwater. Size is, however, difficult to judge at sea, and I have my suspicions that the North Atlantic Shearwater's range overlaps that of the Cape Verde Islands' bird in the neighbourhood of those islands, contrary to the more general belief that the larger bird does not range so far south, but only the production of a specimen of the North Atlantic Shearwater obtained near the Cape Verde Islands can prove it.

A rarer species, the Sooty Shearwater (*Puffinus griseus*) is dark brown above and slightly lighter brown beneath, and is the only large shearwater which is brown all over which is likely to be seen in the Atlantic. Others may be met with, but if the species I have mentioned are known the presence of a stranger will be more readily detected.



THE STUDY OF DUCKS, GEESE AND SWANS

By Lieut.-Commander Peter Scott, M.B.E., D.S.C., R.N.V.R.

It is scarcely 50 years since the majority of amateur ornithologists were collectors of bird skins or birds' eggs. But fashions change and ornithology has never been so popular as it is today when most of its devotees collect facts and photographs rather than specimens.

Collecting and using facts is rather like doing a jigsaw puzzle. At first we cannot tell where or how a new observation will fit in to the pattern of the natural history of a bird. As in the jigsaw puzzle we start by putting all the blue pieces up at the top where we expect the sky to be without yet knowing how these pieces will fit together. Often we find that the blue piece was really a reflection of the sky in the water at the bottom. But, nevertheless, collecting these facts together is something infinitely worth doing ; collecting them and, just as important, recording them in the proper way. It is in massing a great volume of well recorded data about birds that the Royal Naval Bird-Watching Society is doing such valuable work. No ornithologist can ever know when some other worker may not seize hold of what seems a trivial observation of fact, and fit it triumphantly, as a last link, into the chain of some more extensive research. Observations of this kind, which may suddenly turn out to be of great importance, can be made all over the world and particularly at sea, for we know little enough of the behaviour of birds when they are flying over the oceans. They can also be made from various specialised observation points such as Skokholm, Fair Isle, Lundy, Isle of May, and many other bird haunts which have been highly developed to make the best use of the opportunities which each of these stations has to offer. Such a research station is the area of the Severn Estuary known as the New Grounds which has been developed by the Severn Wildfowl Trust as the first centre for the particular study of the Anatidae. This area is the winter home of great flocks of wild geese which come from their breeding grounds in the Arctic to live, between September and March, on the

wide estuary and the green marshes which border it on the southern shore. The geese have been coming to this particular marsh for many generations—indeed since as far back as any records go. At peak times during January the flock may be 4,000 strong and most winters between two and three thousand geese can be seen there between December and March.

One of the Severn Wildfowl Trust's principal objects is the study of this great flock of geese. The birds are mostly White-fronted Geese (*Anser a. albifrons*), but a number of Pink-footed Geese (*anser Arvensis brachyrhynchus*, although I would prefer to call them *Anser brachyrhynchus*) arrive early in the season and leave again in November. Every other species and race of wild goose on the British List has been seen there at one time or another, and in the cold winter of 1946-47 no less than ten species and subspecies were recorded in the season. In two seasons we have seen seven kinds of wild geese on one day. These included the very rare Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*), identified with certainty only nine times in Britain, six of them within the last four winters on the Severn Estuary. Even the brilliantly plumaged Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*) has been recorded twice on the stretch of green marsh where the geese feed, which is known as the Dumbles, and which is covered by the high spring tides. The marsh is bordered by a sea wall and it is over this bank that some old pillboxes, interspersed with newly-constructed observation huts, give what is often an outstanding view of the wild geese. Sometimes they are less than ten yards away and they are, of course, quite unaware of the presence of the watchers.

These huts have been used principally for a scientific study of the birds. Detailed statistics of the percentage of young birds have been recorded, studies of the social structure of the flock have been made, work is now in progress on various aspects of behaviour and also towards a full understanding of what might be termed the primitive language of the geese. A number of geese have been caught for ringing by means of a special net propelled by rockets.

It has been a principle of the Trust that the geese must not be disturbed if this can possibly be avoided. It has, therefore, been necessary to impose certain restrictions on those watching the geese, and also to limit the use of the observation huts to members of the Trust. Only in this way can a balance be struck which will give an opportunity of study without a risk that the birds will be driven from their traditional winter home.

The cottages which form the headquarters of the organisation are only about 300 yards from the sea wall. The area in between is occupied by a 100-year-old duck decoy which is used for catching ducks for ringing. This had been out of commission for nearly twenty years when the Trust was formed in November, 1946. The all-important " lead " of ducks—the stock of birds which know and regularly use the decoy pool by tradition—had been broken and had then, when the Trust took over, to be built up again. This was helped by rearing

some Mallards by hand on the pool and by restoring the necessary peace and quiet to the surrounding woodland. In the first winter six ducks were caught, in the second 133, and in the present season 270. Of the birds ringed about forty have so far been recovered, or recaptured (and released again) within ten miles of the decoy, while over thirty have been recovered outside that radius—the majority from overseas. Recoveries have been noted in six countries—Sweden, Denmark, Holland, France, Eire, and Italy.

So far the Trust has ringed two species of geese—Pink-foot and White-front caught in the rocket net—and eight species of ducks—Mallard, Widgeon, Pintail, Shoveller, Teal, Garganey, Gadwall and Tufted Duck—all caught in the decoy with the exception of the last two which began to consort with the tame birds in the Trust's enclosures and were eventually trapped.

These tame waterfowl, from all parts of the world, live in some marshy fields around the decoy wood and the headquarters cottages. It is the most representative collection of living Anatidae in the world, and includes some 600 birds of over 100 different species and subspecies—out of a possible total of just over 200. All the species of swans except one (the very rare Trumpeter Swan of North America which has recently been rescued from extinction at the eleventh hour) and all the species of geese except three (Hawaiian, Andean and Kelp geese) are represented in this gathering. It has, of course, an important part to play in ornithology, for a close study of these birds in life has already revealed many previously unknown details of their natural history. A comparison of the various geographical races, as well as of the species and genera, is also of the greatest possible value to the systematist.

But in addition the collection has a special educational significance. These colourful birds, so tame that many will feed from one's hand, and crowd so closely round one's feet that one must take care not to tread on them, very often catch the imagination of the many people, and particularly the young people, who come to see them. Over 5,000 people have visited the Trust's headquarters during the past year. If only a small proportion of these feel that their visit has sown the seed of a lasting interest, then the Trust will have served a useful purpose. In these days when the biggest problem of the new leisure is how to use it, I am convinced that enthusiasm in some such constructive interest as ornithology is the best possible antidote to the key phrase of today—" I couldn't care less".

Members of the R.N.B.W.S. might perhaps be willing to help the Trust in its endeavours by bringing back live ducks, geese or swans from overseas, and might also be ready to collect data which would throw light on the migration of wildfowl—or indeed any other aspect of the specialised study of the Anatidae. At the headquarters of the Trust odd pieces of information, the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle, are always welcome, and special observations correlated by the R.N.B.W.S. would be more useful still.

SEA BIRDS FROM GREAT BRITAIN TO BEAR ISLAND

By Lieutenant Eric Duffey, R.N.V.R.

On July 1st, 1948, I left Grimsby with three companions aboard the Faeroese trawler " Joannes Paturson ", bound for the Faeroe Islands. This was the first step of our journey to Bear Island, a small barren islet lying in the Barents Sea 250 miles north of the North Cape of Norway. Although we did not reach our destination until another eighteen days had passed, we spent a week-end on the Faeroes and six days at Tromsö in North Norway. Without the unfailing kindness and help of the Captain and crew of the " Joannes Paturson " we might have spent much longer on our outward journey.

During the three days steaming to Torshavn, the capital of the Faeroes, we were always in off-shore waters varying from three to twelve miles from land (occasionally more) and the typical sea-birds, Fulmars, Gulls and Auks were continually with us. Terns were also frequent and occasional Gannets appeared from time to time. This concentration of birds in the off-shore zone was clearly shown when we crossed the Moray Firth to Pentland Firth. The frequency of birds decreased considerably as we left the zone twelve miles or so from land. Approaching the north-east tip of Caithness sea-birds became more numerous again and as we passed through Pentland Firth all the common species were extremely numerous. We also began to see such species as the Great and Arctic Skuas and Manx Shearwaters. Many of the Guillemots were accompnaied by fledged young, yet over two weeks later on Bear Island the Guillemots still had eggs or small chicks.

As we crossed the open sea to the Faeroes the Fulmar became more numerous and followed over the ship's wake with much more persistance, a common habit of the Pelagic Fulmar. It may be that the Oceanic Fulmar in the summer has no fixed occupation at that time of the year, such as breeding, and is content to follow a ship for hours on end. Certainly such Fulmars have plenty of leisure time and may wander considerable distances. I remember one solitary bird in mid-Atlantic following a fog-buoy for at least four hours.

Guillemots, Razorbills and Puffins were seen in small numbers all the way to the Faeroes, the last-named being the most numerous.

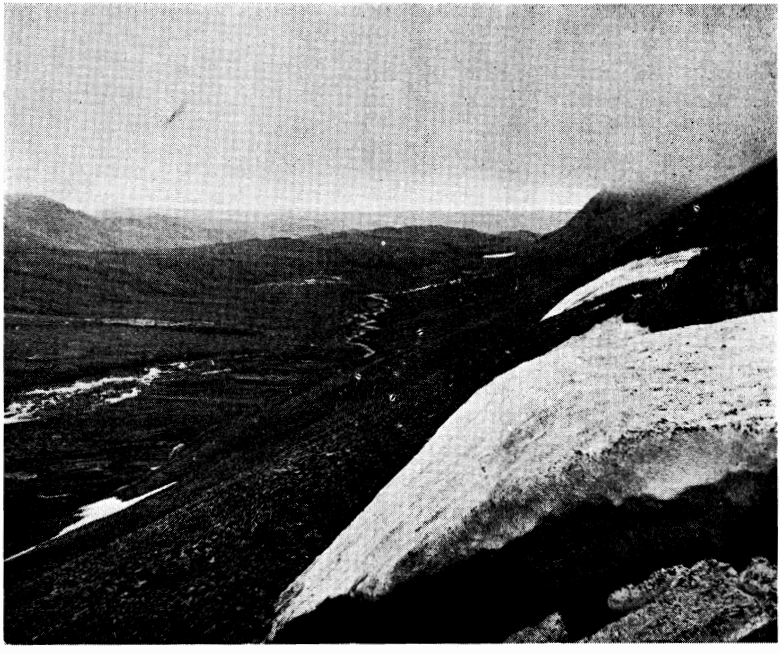
Near the Faeroes a few small Petrels, including three Leach's Fork-tailed Petrels, were seen and we had the unusual experience of being escorted into harbour by Lesser Black-backed Gulls with not a Herring Gull in sight.

From the Faeroes we hoped to make a direct crossing to Bear Island in order that further observations could be made on the oceanic bird

population as we neared Arctic waters. This was not possible, however, and we headed north-east for the Norwegian fjords.

Again Fulmars followed closely over the wake. Gannets were seen up to 150 miles from the Faeroes. Storm-Petrels were seen at occasions during the day and also Guillemots. On the following day we saw our first " blue " Fulmars—birds with a tinge of blue-grey on the head and neck. Throughout the day about three per cent were of the " blue " phase, but all of an intermediate grade. The sudden appearance of the " blue " form and the rather different behaviour of the Fulmars suggested that possibly these birds were of a different population to those seen on the previous day. It is possible that much light might be thrown on the problem of the oceanic distribution of this species by careful observational details at sea, such as frequency, behaviour and stage of moult. In this way it may be possible to trace the range of various breeding populations at sea.

In the fjords, inshore birds appeared again, such as the Black Guillemot, Common Gull, Arctic Skua, and as the fjords narrowed, Eider Ducks, Terns and Oyster-Catchers were seen. We counted the Skuas as we steamed north to Tromso and found that 37 per cent of the total



The Ymer Valley. (*Photograph by Lieut. Eric Duffey, R.N.V.R.*)

seen in the fjords were dark-phase birds. In the Faeroes over 70 per cent are dark birds and on Bear Island out of about 200 birds counted 2 per cent were dark.

In the fjords we made our first acquaintance with the Scandinavian Herring Gull and with most of them the darker mantle was readily noticeable at close quarters. The Scandinavian Lesser Black-backed Gulls were a problem as the Greater Black-backed Gull was also common and unless they came very close to the ship or were together, positive identification was rarely possible. Kittiwakes were seen at sea and in the fjords, but not a single Fulmar was seen from the Lofoten Islands to Tromso.

As we left the fjords on July 15th heading north for Bear Island all the usual sea-birds were very frequent around the ship, but as land became more distant astern they rapidly fell off until only a few Guillemots and Puffins were left. The Fulmar did not appear until the mouth of the fjord was at least 25-30 miles away and thereafter they were continually with us. Only approximately 30 per cent now appeared to be pale birds, but this figure may be too high as many Fulmars appearing pale in the " field " are found to be slightly " blue " when examined in the hand. On Bear Island about 10 per cent of the Fulmars are as pale as British Fulmars and although my figures suggest an increase of the " blue " phase in the 250 miles from Norway to Bear Island, it is probably very small or possibly non-existent.

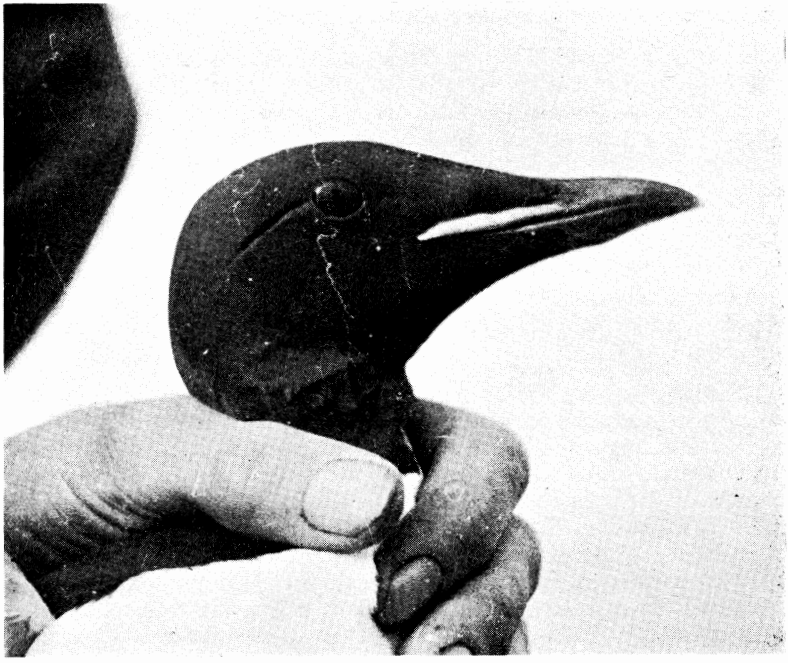
I found that it was impossible in practice to classify the different grades of darkness of plumage in the Fulmar as there are so many intermediate forms between the lightest and the darkest birds. Out of 26 " blue " phase Fulmars, collected, no two were identical in colouration. The method I used was to estimate the number of birds which were as pale as British Fulmars, and the number with a uniform blue-grey colour all over, while the rest were classified as intermediates. Counting on this basis at the Bear Island breeding colonies, 10 per cent were pale birds 15 per cent uniform blue-grey and the remaining 75 per cent had some form of intermediate plumage between the two extremes. Observation from a ship has its difficulties, however, as on some days, according to the light intensity, dark intermediate Fulmars appear uniformly dark and on other occasions very light intermediate Fulmars appear to be genuine pale forms.

Most of the journey to Bear Island was marred by very rough weather and we were all so sick that little observation was possible. The storm abated as we neared the island and when about thirty miles away our steering gear broke down. As we lay adrift in a thick fog waiting for assistance we were able to take stock of the birds around the ship.

A few Fulmars were on the sea around us ; Kittiwakes passed continually, and every now and then a flock of Guillemots whirred by in the fog. Two Arctic Skuas inspected us for a moment before passing on, and a few little Auks flew past the ship on one or two occasions.

In the afternoon I was thrilled to see my first Glaucous Gull looking just like a Herring Gull without black tips to its wings, but it soon passed on into the fog. All these birds certainly made us feel the presence of the island, although it was the next day before we were towed into a bay on the island's north coast. Nobody seemed to know our exact position and it was impossible to ascertain the frequency of sea-birds at various distances from land.

As we approached the north coast the fog lifted and we saw a low cliff dotted with snow banks and one or two small beaches. Sea-birds were now very numerous and we were able to pick out many flocks of Brunnich's and Common Guillemots. Little Auks passed continually chuckling like hysterical children. Glaucous Gulls, Kittiwakes, Puffins, Mandt's Guillemots and Fulmars were all very numerous. As we landed in a small cove we disturbed a splendid Grey Phalarope feeding by the rocks ; again the thrill of a new bird. We found that there were two pairs in the locality feeding mainly on rock pools and in small coves which are found only at one or two places around the island.



Head of Brunnich's Guillemot (*Uria l. lomvia*).
(*Photograph by Lieut. Eric Duffey, R.N.V.R.*)

Most of the island's breeding birds are sea-birds, and although a total of fifty-five different species has been recorded there, at one time or another, only eighteen are regular breeding species. On the sea-cliffs the common nesting species were Common and Brunnich's Guillemots, little Auks, Puffins, Mandt's Guillemots, Fulmars, Kittiwakes and Glaucous Gulls. There were also a number of pairs of Great Black-backed Gulls which were first recorded breeding in 1922 and have increased considerably since that time. We found these distributed all round the coast of Bear Island.

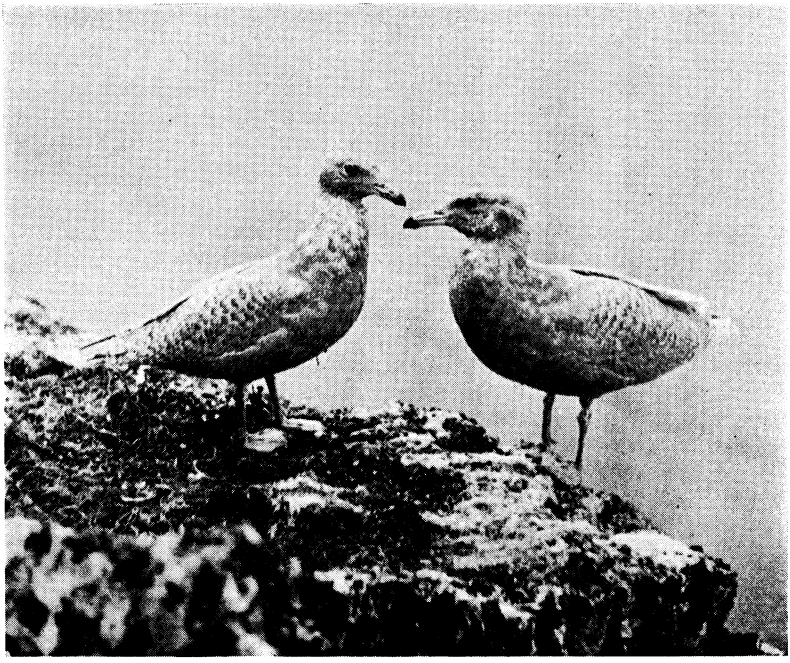
The vast majority of the ledge-nesting Guillemots bred in the south where tremendous cliffs, reaching 1,400 ft. are to be found. Here we found that the common Guillemot was the most numerous, whereas in the west and north where many small Guillemot colonies exist, Brunnich's Guillemot showed a preference for the upper ledges while the Common Guillemot preferred the lower ones. On the other hand, when Guillemots overflowed on to the flat top of the cliffs, it was always the Common Guillemot that did so. The percentage of bridled Guillemots was found to be nearly 54 per cent, the highest anywhere in the range of this species. The interesting ecological relationship between these two species deserves more study.

As far as we could make out both species fed in the offshore zone mainly up to five miles from land, but also up to 15 miles. Many of the Guillemots appeared to feed north of the island ; on both east and west coasts we saw continuous flocks flying south carrying fish in their beaks. Little Auks were found mainly on scree-slopes, including many suitable sites inland and a great many appeared to be non-breeding birds. Mandt's Black Guillemot preferred holes in broken cliffs, as did the Puffin, and we often found them together. On a rocky inland stack on the slopes of Mount Misery we found several pairs of Glaucous Gulls nesting, three pairs of little Auks and four pairs of Mandt's Guillemots. There were few ledges on the sides of the stack, but there were many holes and cracks in the rock ; in these the little Auks and Mandt's Guillemots were rearing their young.

Compact Kittiwake colonies were seen at many points around the coast, and on inland cliffs, but the remarkable feature about this species was the ritual of bathing in the numerous island lakes. To quote one instance : On a lake in the south of the island, we found a flock of about 1,000 birds. They were very restless and the noise of so many birds splashing in the water and calling, was tremendous. Fresh birds were continually joining them and many others flying off to the cliffs again. We found, in fact, that there was a two-way traffic from the cliffs to the lake, the birds choosing valleys in the hills or low sections of the cliff, which they could cross, to reach the bathing lake. This suggests that at least a large proportion of the birds were breeding at the colonies, but the significance of the bathing ritual seems to be unknown.

Of the breeding land-birds the majority were to be found on the lakes, such as Red-throated and Great Northern Divers, Eider and Long-tailed Ducks. Arctic Terns nested on lake islands, as did the water-birds, because it was the only safe refuge from the Arctic fox. Some of the Terns, however, did nest along the coast in very stony areas, and we found that these birds were much more aggressive to our interference than those on the islands. They dived on us repeatedly, striking at our head, but the island-nesting Terns just circled overhead when we waded out to their colonies. A very curious difference in behaviour, and though understandable because the shore-nesting Terns would be vulnerable to the fox, it is difficult to see how it evolved unless the species can adjust its behaviour to the conditions of its nesting habitat.

At midday on August 20th, when we left Bear Island, visibility was very good, but low cloud hung over the tall cliffs on the south coast. To a distance of three miles from the island most of the sea-birds were commonly distributed over the sea. Mandt's Guillemot and the Glaucous Gull were the first to disappear at about three miles, then



Young Glaucous Gulls (*Larus hyperboreus*).
(*Photograph by Lieut. Eric Duffey, R.N.V.R.*)

the little Auk and the Puffin between three and five miles from land. After five miles the two larger Guillemots were present in scattered flocks and when fifteen miles from the island only odd ones appeared. Kittiwakes were common in the five-mile zone and still frequent afterwards, " tarrocks " becoming more numerous as we steamed further into the open sea. It was interesting to note that Fulmars were common in the five-mile zone but much scarcer afterwards. The percentage of Fulmars in moult also decreased considerably as we left land astern.

Most of the Guillemots seen in the open sea were accompanied by young and the few Puffins we saw were unable to become airborne presumably due to moult of some of the flight feathers. They splashed and bounced over the surface of the water in a most awkward fashion. Our return from Norway was through the fjords and then south-west about forty miles off the Norwegian coast and directly across the North Sea to Grimsby. No Fulmars were seen until the fjords were left far behind, the first appearing at 59½° N 8°E. Thereafter they were present in small numbers over the ship's wake. Only one " blue " Fulmar was seen and this was the last we saw on our return journey. From the above position to Grimsby only two Fulmars were seen in moult yet at the breeding colonies at this time of the year (third week in August) many birds in moult can be seen. In the northern part of the North Sea Fulmars were common and followed the ship persistently. Between 52°-50° N Fulmars became scarce and most ignored the ship. I believe such differences in behaviour have some significance and it we had enough details the movements and origins of some oceanic Fulmars might be explained.

Our last day at sea before reaching Grimsby was notable for the land and inshore birds seen from the ship. Three immature grey Wagtails stayed with us awhile and later two Meadow Pipits appeared. During the morning we were surprised to see eight or nine immature Common Gulls with three Herring Gulls appear and follow the ship for an hour or two before passing on south-westwards. This was the first time I have seen Common Gulls more than a mile or two from land ; in this case nearest land was 130 miles away. Another unusual occurrence took place that day, when a Sooty Shearwater joined the few Fulmars over the wake and cruised along with us for half an hour circling astern in long graceful sweeps very much like his white companions.

Fulmars disappeared that evening and next morning, as we entered the Humber, only Herring and Black-backed Gulls followed silently astern.

THREE WEEKS IN NORTH ICELAND

By CAPTAIN BERNARD JEANS, R.M. (RETD.)

After overcoming many transport difficulties, I was able, in company with a colleague, to spend three weeks' intensive birding in the Hrutafjordur district of North Iceland, during June, 1948.

All attempts to reach this northern land by sea having failed, we at last resorted to flying. Leaving Prestwick on June 7th, we arrived over Reykjavik five hours later, only to find a typical northern mist and a consequent difficult landing.

Our four days stay in Reykjavik prior to the journey north was marked by the kindness of Hr. Thordur Einarsson in allowing us to stay with him in a town where inflation has run wild. Bird life in the town is noticeably absent—no typical town birds such as Sparrows (*Passer d. domesticus L*) or Starlings (*Sturnus v. vulgaris L*). Surprisingly enough the Arctic Tern (*Sterna macrura*) attempts to fill this gap, and is remarkably tame and confiding. The occasional White Wagtail (*Motacilla a. alba*) was the only bird seen in the house gardens.

A short trip out to Pingvalla Vatn, a very large lake about forty miles to the east, gave us first views of Long-tailed Duck (*Clangula hyemalis L*) and Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa l. limosa L*) resplendent in breeding plumage.

The breeding range of the latter species is mostly confined to the south-west of the island. Iceland Redshank (*Tringa totanus robusta*) were seen here—this species appeared in the field to be much darker than our own bird.

Whimbrel (*Numenius p. phaeopus*) were, of course, common, and the lovely dark-breasted Northern Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria altifrons*) was in good numbers. Close to the big lake some birch scrub gave us good views of the Iceland Redwing (*Turdus musicus coburni*) and what lovely birds they are—rufus thighs and white eye-stripe are shown to good effect. Wherever there was sufficient birch, Redwings were usually to be seen, often perched on the telephone wires, if any. The nest hidden away on the ground underneath scrub birch was not easy to find, even when young were being fed.

Owing to weather conditions, a late spring, and a landslide on the road to the extreme north-west, our projected trip to the Isafjordur area had to be abandoned. Instead we made for the Hrutafjordur district on the north coast, through which runs the main Reykjavik-Akureyri road.

On June 12th we left by shooting-brake for the north—the journey round the head of Hvalfjordur with a young Icelandic driver at the wheel will not easily be forgotten, as will be appreciated by those who know the road.

Whimbrel and Northern Golden Plover were often seen from the car, as was the Iceland Raven (*Corvus corax islandicus*) and Redwings on the roadside wires.

At 1800 hours that evening we arrived at Stadur, a farm at the head of the Hrutafjordur, where tents were pitched. It is to the undying credit of the farmer (who spoke no English) that he took pity on two Englishmen suddenly arriving out of the blue, and allowed us to camp. All our observations and photography were done within walking distance of this farm.

Immediately behind and to the east, the ground rose in a gradual slope to about 250 metres, whilst to the west lay the estuary of the River Hunafloi, a typical Arctic valley and delta. As we climbed the hill to the east and approached the plateau, Snow Buntings (*Plectrophenax n. nivalis*) became quite numerous, nesting in holes among the rocks and beside the hill burns. What a lovely little bird the cock is, like a snowflake, as he flies from one rock to another. They could often be heard singing from a convenient boulder—the song seemed to be softer and sweeter than the normal bunting. It is amazing how quickly the second clutch is started while the chicks of the first have not left the nest. A few breeding pairs of Purple Sandpiper (*Calidris m. maritima*) were seen on the stony tops, doubtless there were more —we found two pairs with young, after much difficulty. By holding a youngster in the hand, the old bird (we only saw one at a time) would come to within two to three feet of us. We never found the actual nest and eggs in spite of much effort. This species could be seen feeding down on the river estuary.

The Northern Golden Plover and Whimbrel abounded on the tops, as did the Northern Dumlin (*Calidris a. alpina*), and the cheery little Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) was always to be seen on the small dubh lochs and bogs. We found the Faeroe Snipe (*Capella gallinago faeroeensis*) which is the Icelandic species, breeding quite high up along with the Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensus*), Snow Bunting and occasional Wheatear (*Oenanthe o. oenanthe*). Ptarmigan (*Lagopus mutus islandorum*) were by no means common, those seen were much whiter than our Scottish birds. No White-tailed Eagles (*Halioeetus albicilla*) and only one Iceland Falcon (*Falco rusticolus islandus*) were observed, probably due to the lack of suitable breeding cliffs for these birds.

Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) and Great Northern Diver (*Colymbus immer*) were two species we were particularly keen to observe and photograph.

A thorough search of all the big lakes in the district was started and with luck we quickly found both species nesting withing twenty yards of each other on an island. The former was a typical swan's nest, containing four eggs and the Diver had two eggs, similar but larger than our Black-throated Diver. Two pairs of Greater Black-backed Gulls (*Larus marinus L*) had nests on this island. Long-tailed Duck, Scaup (*Aythya m. marila L*) and the odd Red-necked Phalarope were

seen swimming on the lake. A nest of the former duck was found close by—Scaup are very late nesters and had only just started at the beginning of July.

An interesting place indeed for an ornithologist in these northern areas where birds are thin on the ground. The Swans were certainly most wary and left the nesting island as soon as we appeared in sight, keeping well out in the middle of the lake and looking much more graceful than our own Mute Swans. The pair which we photographed had their necks stained russet red.

The Great Northern Diver is certainly well distributed on the bigger lakes of Iceland, whereas the Red-throated Diver (*Colymbus stellatus*) is well represented on the smaller bog pools and tarns. The Great Northern appears, and is, much bigger than our Black-throated Diver, with a noticeably heavier head and bill, but without quite the same beautiful markings down the side of the neck.

The weird high-pitched laughing call carried a great distance—we would often hear birds in the evening, flying out to sea at a great height, whilst in our tents.

Our pair well merited the name " Loon ", for no two birds could have been more careless or stupid about their eggs—with Greater Black-backed Gulls nesting close by.

Arctic Skuas (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) were not nearly so common as we had expected—breeding pairs were very scattered, nothing like the big colonies met with in the Shetlands. The absence of any birch scrub prevented us seeing Redwing during our stay in the district.

The river delta which lay just below and to the west of our camp was typical of the north with many winding channels and sandbanks. One could well imagine that many migrant Geese would stop on this flat grassy valley en route from Greenland and Spitzbergen. The farmer told me that this was so, and that in late September and October the valley would be full of resting Geese.

We did find one pair of breeding Greylags, with a nest close by the river. Several Whooper Swans would often be seen feeding in the valley, having flown down from their nesting lakes in the hills.

Oyster-catcers (*Haematopus ostralegus*) and Ringed Plover (*Charadrius h. histicula L*) were numerous on the estuary, as, of course, were Eider (*Somateria m. mollissima*). Iceland Redshank were very common on the low ground and looked odd perched on the telephone wires and fences. Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator L*) were often about, but we saw no sign of the pretty little Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus h. histronicus L*).

In all, between June 12th and July 2nd, in the district around Stadur, we saw thirty different species of which eighteen were proved to breed.

The Arctic does not lay claim to great variety, but does give great satisfaction to those who make the effort.

The return journey by bus to Reykjavik was uneventful and the Scottish Airways weekly plane landed us back at Prestwick on July 6th.

BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY—THE AMATEUR'S EQUIPMENT

By CAPTAIN G. S. TUCK, D.S.O., R.N.

Since Richard and Cherry Kearton gave the lead in wild-life photography over sixty years ago so many notable works have been published, each showing such perfection in photographic art, that a new recruit to bird photography might feel deterred from making a start. "Take courage"—there is still an immense field of bird life to be recorded pictorially, particularly in those odd corners of the world which the Navy visits from time to time. Moreover, it is the record of movements at really close quarters with birds, an essential part of bird photography, apart from a chance of a unique pictorial record, that makes the hobby so fascinating.

An expensive modern camera is certainly not a prerequisite, and first-class results can be obtained using the robust old-fashioned field cameras which demand only a small price in the camera stores today. It is a camera of this sort that I still cling to, and though I am quite an amateur at the game, some details of my equipment may be of use to a beginner.

I bought the camera thirty years ago, as a Cadet, and it was second-hand then. Sands Hunter, the shop in Bedford Street, off the Strand, where I bought it, is still flourishing and one of the assistants is fitting up bird cameras today. Every bird photograph that I have taken has been with this grand old third-hand camera.

The Camera and Shutters

It is a quarter-plate "Tropical Sanderson" field camera, with double extension bellows, and a Goertz roller blind shutter at the back. In front of the bellows I have now fitted a "Luc" diaphram shutter, bought from the same shop. The "Luc" shutter is operated by a common thumb push bowden wire and has no set speeds, but with a little practice you can soon learn to work it at speeds between $\frac{1}{2}$ second and 1/20th second. This shutter has the advantage that no "click" occurs until the diaphram finally closes after the picture is taken. The roller blind shutter at the back will work at varying speeds from 1/10th to 1/1000th the first blind (1/10th to 1/40th) being relatively silent. On one side of the roller blind shutter a clever artificer has fitted a lever device to enable one to release the shutter by a line from a distance.

The Lens

I have come to the conclusion that a lens of focal length between 8 ins. and 10ins. provides the happy mean for this sort of work. For small birds one can work successfully at between 4 to 6 ft., for larger birds at a distance of 10 ft. or so.

In front of my " Luc " shutter I have an 8½-in. Dallmeyer Series II stigmatic lens. If I wish I am able to juggle with its combined lenses and produce a higher power " telephoto " effect made possible by inserting a piece of brass tubing between the " Luc " shutter and adjusted lens to act as an extra extension to the bellows and bring the field into focus. I have rarely used this combination, as it makes the camera very " nose heavy ".

The Tripod and Tilting Base

For tripod I use the largest size " Jaynay " quickset tripod. A locally made addition has been the fixing of a tilting turntable on top of the tripod. This consists simply of two squares of wood hinged so that the upper half is capable of being tilted. Two brass guides, fitted with butterfly nuts, hold the tilted base at the desired angle. The base of the camera is screwed into the upper tilting half, and the lower half is screwed to the tripod and rotates around it until tightened up.

This device is invaluable as the lie of the land rarely permits the tripod itself to be set exactly for the required picture.

The Hiding Tent

I believe that most bird photographers use a simple box-like tent made up of four stout wooden poles, each pole made in two parts socketed together, with stiff wire linking the upper ends. Over this structure is draped a hessian cover, the whole supported by guys.

My own tent is I think more ingenious, and is designed for extreme compactness, but it needs some workshop assistance to make. Here is the description :—

Take a golf umbrella. Cut off the shaft just below the catch which retains the umbrella in the spread position. Fit an externally-threaded ferrule to the shaft and butterfly net. Cut three equal lengths of 1-in. flat bar and bore a hole in each end. Slip the ends of these spreaders over the shaft ferrule after spreading the " brolly " and set at 120° to each other. Then screw on the butterfly nut. The upper ends of the three brass rod uprights, which are themselves each made in three short sections socketed together, fit into the outer holes of the three spreaders. The tent then stands on its three uprights with the top spread. Its height can be altered by discarding one or more sections of the uprights. Sew small curtain rings all round the perimeter of the umbrella. The skirt of the tent is made up of a lightweight green material, and a line of hooks is sewn along the upper edge. After erecting tent it is only necessary to hook the skirts round the rim of the umbrella. As a refinement, and to tauten the material of the tent, I usually reeve a length of stiff wire through a line of curtain rings fixed half way up the skirt, and peg the skirt down with skewers.

The tent is guyed with four light guys from four of the rings on the rim of the umbrella.

The whole tent folds up and stows in a small canvas bag, and the roof is waterproof.

Plates

I use Ilford HP3 panchromatic quarter plates, and always develop in total darkness for the prescribed number of minutes.

Shutter Speeds

When working from a hide I rarely use a speed of more than 1/30th second, and prefer to work at a slow shutter speed and stop down accordingly.

Working from a hide one can usually wait for the moment when the bird poses for you.

Working with the remote release, which involves pulling a line, I usually work at the higher speeds and wider stop, for there is always a danger of camera shake, and one cannot judge the best moment to catch the bird stationary. Conditions of light vary tremendously, of course, and a good exposure meter is invaluable.

Working Single Handed

Some birds are much shyer than others, but it is a great mistake to think that you have to rely on a second person to escort you to your tent and finally walk away in an unconcerned manner to hoodwink the bird. Almost all my work has been done single handed, including approaching, entering and leaving the tent, and I have found birds rarely shy at the appearance of the hiding tent. The secret is I think to work slowly and quietly and to set up the tent in at least two stages, first of all erecting it without precision 12 ft. or more from the site and after leaving it thus for 24 hours moving it up into its final position. There have been many occasions, however, when I have set up my tent at very close quarters to the site in one stage.

I use the back end of a beer bottle to represent the camera lens before I return to get to work with the camera.

Some Suggestions

To photograph birds it is not much good chasing them with a camera (here I exclude the art of photographing birds in flight). Find out the bird's favourite haunt, be it nest, outcrop of rock, chimney pot, or feeding ground. Set up shop in this area, and with a little patience, and perhaps a little luck, your bird will oblige.

Do not " click off " as soon as your bird appears. In almost every case you will get a better picture by awaiting the *moment juste*.

If you have to open up foliage in order to get a clear filed, never cut the foliage, tie it back carefully with green string, and allow it to spring back after photography.

The principal object is to notice and record observations in detail at close range, and, when photographing nesting operations, to withdraw at once if you see indications that the bird is scared and might desert its nest. To avoid such a calamnity one must work very quietly and with circumspection.

The Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis ispida*). (*Photograph by Captain G. S. Tuck, R.N.*)

RECORDS FROM SEA

1. Unless otherwise stated all records are for 1948.
2. Observer's initials are placed after each record in brackets and can be readily identified from the Address List at the end of the report.
3. The scientific names of species are shown in brackets after the English names, which appear in alphabetical order. The binomial term is given except where the editors consider sub-specific identification proved beyond all doubt, when the trinomial is used.
4. In cases where the editors do not consider identification fully proved the whole record is enclosed in square brackets.
5. Since records cover a wide geographical area place of observation is normally given by naming the anchorage, bay, sea or ocean followed by the exact position in longitude and latitude.

AUK, Little (*Alle alle*).

English Channel. 49°32′N 3°40′W. 25th November. One flew on board in an exhausted condition. (C.E. Halliday).

CHAFFINCH (*Fringilla coelebs*).

North Irish Sea. 55°N 05°30′W. 26th November, 1947. Two males flying north-west. (A.H.W.)

Ten miles east of Valetta, Malta. 22nd October. One female settled on board, was captured and released when ship was one mile from Malta, when it flew towards the shore. (N.C.W.)

Off Ushant. 48°26′N 05°37′W. 6th November. Flock of approximately twenty flying E.S.E. at sea level. (G.S.T.)

CURLEW (*Numenius arquata*).

Twelve miles off Arbroath. 2nd July. One flying north at 50 ft. (E.D.)

DOVE, Turtle (*Streptopelia turtur*).

Bay of Biscay. 50°04′N 6°05′W. 15th May. Two flying north at 50 ft. (N.A.G.H.B.)

FLYCATCHER, Spotted (*Muscicapa striata*).

North Sea. 58°N 9°E. 6th June. One caught on board and later released. (T.M.G.)

HOOPOE (*Upupa epops*).

Gulf of Aden. 12°45′N 48°15′E. 4th August. Two flying in a southerly direction. (D.R.B.)

LAPWING (*Vanellus vanellus*).

North Irish Sea. 55°N 5°30′W. 26th November, 1947. Flock of thirty flying north-west. (A.H.W.)

Strait of Gibraltar. 36°4′N 06°15′W. 13th November. Flock of thirty followed by one of twenty-five flying south at fifty feet above the sea across the Straits. (G.S.T.)

MURRELET, Crested (*Synthliboramphus wumizusume*).

Tsugaru Strait. 8th August. Two groups of approximately 100 birds floating on the sea. (E.H.J.)

ORIOLE, Golden (*Oriolus oriolus*).

Gulf of Aden. 12°44′N 48°35′E. 4th August. One flew on board ; after resting, departed to the south. (D.R.B.)

OYSTER-CATCHER (*Haematopus ostralegus*).

Sixty miles off Ushant. 47°45′N 6°45′E. 18th February. Single, exhausted, landed on board. (R.M.T.)

Copinsay Isle, 15.5 miles. 105°. 15th July. One flying south-west. (G.H.V.)

PETREL, Fulmar (*Fulmaris glacialis*).

North Atlantic. 47°04′N 34°21′W. 24th August. One observed. (L.B.M.)

PIPIT, Meadow (*Anthus pratensis*).

North Sea. 56°30′N 1°E. 28th August. Two settled on board. (E.D.)

REDSTART (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*).

Bay of Biscay. 45°27′N 08°22′W. 8th Novenmber. One male alighted on ship, departing south at one hundred feet. (G.S.T.)

ROBIN (*Erithacus rubecula*).

Off North-west African coast. 33°45′N 09°10′W. 18th November. One arrived on board. (G.S.T.)

SHEARWATER, Great (*Puffinus gravis*).

Skagerak. 58°N 9°E. 10th June. Five flying westwards. (T.M.G.)

West of Canary Islands. 27°20′N 22°00′W. 21st November. Fifty plus, singly and in flocks up to six ranging over the area. (G.S.T.)

SHEARWATER, Pale-footed or Wedge-tailed (*Puffinus carnepipes* or *pacificus*).

Entrance to Tsugaru Strait. 8th August. Two to three hundred leaving rocky coast and flying E.S.E. (E.H.J.)

SHEARWATER, Sooty (*Puffinus griseus*).

North Sea. 57°N 1°30′E. 28th August. One observed. (E.D.)

SHEARWATER, White-faced (*Puffinus leucomelas*).

Off Formosa and Ryuku Isles. 22nd-23rd July. Groups seen flying with general southerly tendency. Largest group about fifty. (E.H.J.)

Sea of Japan, off Oki Island. 24th August. In typhoon conditions, wind south, force 7-8. Five observed attempting to make towards land, but being blown to northward. (E.H.J.)

SHEARWATER (*Puffinus kuhlii*).

Straits of Gibraltar. 35°40′N 06°15′W. 13th November. Thirty plus seen in the Straits. (G.S.T.)

SKUA, Arctic (*Stercorarius parasiticus*).

About forty miles off Norwegian coast. 67°N 12°E. 7th July. One dark phase seen. (E.D.)

SKUA, Great (*Stercorarius skua*).

Twenty-five miles south of Torbay. 7th July. Two flying south. (T.M.G.)

STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*).

North Irish Sea. 55°N 5°30′W. 26th November, 1947. Between 0900 and 1200 hours approximately, twenty flocks, average strength thirty birds, observed flying north-west towards Northern Ireland at ten feet. Two juveniles deviated and settled on board. After remaining for half an hour, they flew off north-west. (A.H.W.)

Off Lowestoft. 52°N 1°E. Between 16th and 24th October, 1947. Small parties of adult birds flying in a southerly direction. (D.R.B.)

Off Lowestoft. 52°N 1°E. 14th November, 1947. Flock of approximately thirty flying on a steady westerly course at fifty feet. (D.R.B.)

Ten miles E.N.E. of Cromarty. 29th October. One settled on board. (P.J.S.S.)

Off Ushant. 48°26′N 05°37′W. 6th November. One flew on board from north and departed south-east. (G.S.T.)

SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*).

North Sea. 56°47′N 00°31′E. 13th May. One circling ship. (A.S.T.)

SWALLOW, Eastern variety (*Hirundo rustica*).

China Sea. 01°28′N 107°10′E. 9th October. Many appeared singly and in pairs, some staying on board. They came from north-west and departed towards the east. (D.R.B.)

China Sea. 03°10′N 112°03′E. 18th October. Several appeared round the ship towards dusk, one staying on board all night. (D.R.B.)

SWIFT (*Apus apus*).

North-west African coast. 37°21′N 9°15′W. 28th June. Two flying south at fifty feet. (D.R.B.)
North-west African coast. 36°40′N 8°10′W. 28th June. Four flying north-west at fifty feet. Two of these attempted to rest on mast. (D.R.B.)
Mediterranean. 35°55′N 14°38′E. 11th August. Five flying S.S.E. (N.C.W.)
Mediterranean, five miles due east of Valetta, Malta. 17th August. Seven flying S.S.E. (N.C.W.)

TERN, Brown-winged (*Sterna anaetheta*).

Indian Ocean. 8°15′N 56°50′E. 7th August. One appeared on board during middle watch. Remained until 9th August when ship in position 3°40′N 65°4′E. Bird departed north-east. (D.R.B.)

WAGTAIL, Grey (*Motacilla cinerea*).

North Sea. 57°N 1°30′E. 28th August. Three immature settled on board. (E.D.)

WAGTAIL, White (*Motacilla a. alba*).

Ten miles east of Valetta, Malta. 28th October. One flew on board, was captured and released three miles from Valetta, when it flew directly towards land. (N.C.W.)

WARBLER, Garden (*Sylvia borin*).

English Channel. 49°25′N 8°15′W. 21st September. One which appeared exhausted settled on board. (A.S.T.)

WARBLER, Willow (*Phylloscopus trochilus*).

Off North-west African coast. 33°45′N 09°10′W. 18th November. One remained on board an hour, photographed. (G.S.T.)

MALTA REPORT

The Society is most fortunate in having three enthusiatic members at Hal Far airfield in Malta. Captain Traill, Commander Sholto Douglas and Lieutenant Allenby have between them produced some valuable reports on birds observed around the airfield during 1948.

It is to be hoped that before they leave the island they will be able to hand over the good work they have started to some equally zealous and efficient observers. Malta is well placed for the study of bird migration and it has not received the attention from ornithologists which it deserves. Here then is a fine opportunity for members of the R.N.B.W.S. to build up our knowledge of bird life in this island.

So long as the Royal Navy continues to use Malta as a base we should always have several members on hand for this interesting and important study.

Hal Far airfield is ideal for watching birds as it is one of the few green areas on the island and probably the only place free from the nefarious Maltese bird trappers. In addition to the main islands there is an attractive rocky islet called Filfla which has received two visits from R.N.B.W.S. members.

The first visit was carried out in May, 1947, and the second on July 8th of this year. Evidence that *Puffinus k. kuhli* is breeding on the island was found by the discovery of a nest containing one fledgling in a burrow.

The full report compiled by the three members is, unfortunately, too long to give here. It has been compiled in the form of a log and lists the birds seen on and about the airfield daily from April 10th to the end of the year (1948).

As an example of what can be seen on the airfield the following were recorded on November 11th : Golden Plover (10), Dotterel (30-40), Kentish Plover (about 12), Redshank, Sandling, Peregrine Falcon, White Wagtail, Wheatear and an unidentified Harrier.

Malta would seem to be an excellent place for large-scale ringing and the airfield a suitable site for traps. Unfortunately the Bird-Ringing Committee have not approved of the idea and will not permit us to use rings outside Great Britain. In spite of this there is still a tremendous amount of interesting work, which a keen ornithologist can carry out on this migratory stepping-stone. Any member who finds himself appointed to a ship or shore establishment in Malta should make every effort to contact one of the three members at present there so that they may carry on the good work, which has been so ably started.

ODD NOTES

Trust Enquiries. Members have taken an active part in these important and interesting co-operative studies. From time to time details of current enquiries are given in R.N.B.W.S. Bulletins.

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R.N.C. Dartmouth Field Club. For the first time in its history the Club has produced a bird report. It is hoped that the idea will be continued, since the value of such a report, especially one covering a number of years, is great. It is suggested that the check list number should be placed in brackets after the names of birds listed in the records section.

Congratulations to Neal Rankin, Eric Duffy and Anthony Mayo (all members of the R.N.B.W.S.) for their interesting and invigorating papers on birds in the Atlantic, published in " British Birds " and the " Ibis ".

* * * *

Bird Ring Recovery. W. E. Glass was responsible for sending in a bird ring, " Paris Museum H.A. 1834 ", which he recovered from a dead linnet found on Hayling Island. Miss Leach, of the British Museum, said the bird had been ringed at St. Laurent (Gironde), France—the first recorded instance of this specie being ringed in France and recovered over here.

* * * *

A British Storm Petrel with unusual first-year plumage was sent in by Commander Irving and identified by Dr. Harrison.

* * * *

A Northern Guillemot, which had been killed by under-water blast, was sent in by Sub-Lieutenant D. S. Smith. Dr. Harrison kindly examined the bird, and reported that the cause of death made an interesting comparison with the post-mortem findings of birds killed by the blast effect of aerial bombs.

* * * *

Shearwater Reconnaissence. Captain Dacre Stroud was fortunate to be a member of a party which included E. M. Nicholson and James Fisher, which carried out a short cruise in the yawl, *Petula*, owned by Lieut.-Colonel Hasler, R.M. (retd.). Object was to study the autumn movement of Shearwaters in home waters. The four-day trip yielded evidence of the presence of *P. p. Mauretanicus* in Channel Islands and British waters.

PAST PAPERS, RECORDS AND REPRINTS RECEIVED FROM MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS

The following have been received by the Society in answer to letters kindly printed by the Editors of the " Ibis ", " British Birds ", " R.S.P.B. Quarterly Journal " and " Country Life ", on behalf of the R.N.B.W.S., calling for past and future oceanic bird records. All authors are warmly thanked for the trouble they have taken in producing their papers.

1. BIRD LIFE IN AUSTRALIA.

   By Lieut.-Commander F. S. Maclure, R.N.
   Briefly covers experiences of the author during a two-year Commission with R.A.N., 1936-1938. Describes in general terms bird life likely to be seen on that station.

2. SOME BIRDS SEEN IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC, JUNE-DECEMBER, 1941.
   By Captain E. H. Thomas, R.N.
   Day-by-day observations of birds seen during patrols in North Atlantic waters. References to Fulmar colour phases.
3. BIRDS SEEN IN NORTH ATLANTIC, AUGUST-SEPTEMBER, 1934.
   By K. B. Rooke.
   " British Birds " reprint.
4. BIRDS SEEN IN NORTH ATLANTIC, AUGUST-SEPTEMBER, 1935.
   By K. B. Rooke.
   " British Birds " reprint.
5. BIRDS SEEN ON PASSAGE PLYMOUTH-NEW YORK AND RETURN, MAY-JUNE, 1939.
   By Captain H. R. H. Vaughan, R.B.
   Day-by-day observations with full weather and sea data.
6. SOME RECORDS MADE OFF CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA, 1941.
   By Dr. G. E. Beven.
7. NOTES MADE ON A VOYAGE FROM COLOMBO TO SOUTHAMPTON, AUTUMN 1945.
   By Jeffrey H. Gush.
8. ORNITHOLOGICAL DIARY OF A VOYAGE IN THE S.S. SAMLUZON, JUNE-JULY, 1945.
   By Major W. W. A. Phillips.
   Reprint from journal of the Bombay Natural History Society April, 1947. Route taken St. John, N.B.-Cape St. Vincent, through Mediterranean and Red Seas, across the Arabian Seas to Karachi.
9. A FEW RECORDS MADE OFF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS in 1946.
   By J. Hamilton.
10. BIRDS OF THE ARABIAN AND RED SEAS.
    By P. I. R. Maclaren.
    Reprint from Bombay Natural History Society, December, 1946. An analysis of five voyages.
11. SOME OBSERVATIONS MADE DURING A CRUISE FROM LONDON TO THE CANARY ISLANDS IN APRIL, 1947.
    By John Buxton.
12. OBSERVATIONS MADE DURING A CRUISE FROM NEWCASLTE TO STAVANGER AND BACK, AUGUST-SEPTEMBER, 1947.
    By Dr. G. Beven.

ROYAL NAVAL BIRD-WATCHING SOCIETY

RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30TH NOVEMBER, 1948

	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
BALANCE 1ST DECEMBER, 1947 :		
Cash at Bank	111 17 8	
Cash in Hand	2 11 4	
		114 9 0
Entrance Fees and Annual Subscriptions of Ordinary Members	9 15 0	
Entrance Fees and Annual Subscriptions of Life Members ..	47 5 6	
		57 0 6
		£171 9 6
BALANCE BROUGHT DOWN :		
Cash at Bank	111 13 2	
Cash in Hand	2 14 0	
		114 7 2

	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Postages		10 6 1
Stationery		1 13 3
Annual Report		44 2 10
1948 Subscription to British Trust for Ornithology ..		1 0 2
BALANCE 30TH NOVEMBER, 1948 :		
Cash at Bank	111 13 2	
Cash in Hand	2 14 0	
		114 7 2
		£171 9 6

19, Fenchurch Street,
London, E.C.3.
10*th December*, 1948.

I have examined the above account with the books and records of the Society and certify that it is correct and in accordance therewith.

(*Signed*) R. G. PEGLER,
Chartered Accountant, Hon. Auditor.